

Nation

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The times are a'changing

By Will Nicholls

The Cree days of darkness imposed on us by Hydro-Quebec appear to be sliding into the past. Their electricity has made our homes and, now, some Cree lives brighter.

A number of years ago I wrote an article entitled "Inside The Evil Empire," a tongue-in-cheek attempt at being the Cree version of Hunter S. Thompson. At the time I had met one of the very few Crees working in a permanent job for Hydro-Quebec.

Our Hydro-Quebec guide to LG2 and all its glory criticized *the Nation* for its story on Hydro-Quebec's failure to provide the 150 jobs they promised Crees. He felt we were being unfair.

As for the Cree employee, I had jokingly called him a traitor to his own people. I would say that I am ashamed today, but I am not. At the time it was nearly appropriate, given the fight the Crees were in to stop the Great Whale Project.

Today, however, the peace pipe has been lit and smoked with great gusto by the Cree and Hydro-Quebec. No longer would it be right to jokingly refer to a Cree as a traitor for working for Hydro-Quebec. The times have changed and rightly so even as we keep a wary eye on future plans.

Today there are many Crees who have benefited, either through contracts or employment, from the latest projects.

These thoughts came to me when I was in Sin City, aka Sodom and Gomorrah, aka Val d'Or, for the Niskamoon golf tournament and Graduation. Fifteen Cree souls had completed their training and were on their way to permanent jobs with Hydro-Quebec.

It's a new age that started long before Harper's apology that is a result of a change in the cultures of both the Cree and Hydro-Quebec.



It definitely is tied to the Crees accepting the responsibility to take over the obligations under the JBNQA the provincial and federal governments couldn't handle. Of course this gives the Cree Nation more steps towards self-government. Never forget we had always had control over our destinies.

But the point here is that we are changing as a people and a culture and it is reflected in our leaders and in our peoples' mindsets.

No longer do we have traitors (even jokingly). Now we have people going out and working to make a living. One former student, now employed by Hydro-Quebec, nailed it when she said it is "a very good living at that."

I could never write another story, given the current status, called "Inside The Evil Empire."

I did talk to Hydro-Quebec saying the Crees aren't looking at giving up another river but we are willing to talk wind power and the benefits it could bring to both the Cree and Hydro-Quebec. The times have changed and so have we all.

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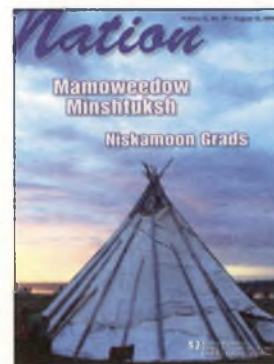


photo courtesy of:
Ernest Webb



China or bust

By the time you read this, the Olympics may be nearing the end of its scheduled events way over at the other end of the tunnel to China. I always wonder why we Cree don't have any contenders for the Olympics, so I have come up with some possible reasons.

Reason 1: Hockey doesn't qualify for summer Olympics, so the Crees' favourite pastime cannot be accepted as a legitimate sport. And 2: Dog sledging is now long gone past time, and again, it's a winter sport. The same goes for snowshoeing, sledding and so on. So why is it that Crees only seem active in the winter months?

Well, first of all, the summer months are a time of relaxation and recovering from the harrowing and tedious winter months of toiling just to stay warm and cozy, that's why. Perhaps that is why the term "lazy Indian" came to be, when the fur traders were around to witness the summer vacation of the Cree (and possibly other First Nations), and determined that that was the way it was year round, with everyone just setting nets, picking berries, staying up all night and getting married.

Of course, those were lazy summer days, with every other animal that we lived off doing the same thing: geese were moulting, fox furs (and every other fur bearer) were horrid, ducks and other waterfowl were busy tending to their young. Besides, mosquitoes and black flies were just intolerable, so any breeze off the shores of lakes, rivers and bays were more than welcome.

So, any summer sports besides those involving paddling we could rarely qualify for. Perhaps we could invent a few other sports we might excel in.

A slingshot competition might be something that could be introduced, with little plastic birds to use as targets. Perhaps fishing using a primitive stick and handmade materials and lures, with criteria of casting, not losing your hook, best bait, and of course, largest fish (with extra points going for quickest and tastiest cooked fish). Chopping down trees could be an Olympic sport, providing that the whole tree would be used to appease the tree huggers, or perhaps a gold medal could be given to the fastest tree planter and for the most number of trees planted per hectare.

A major event could be called the gruelling portage, where the competitor would fashion a canoe out of materials from the land, using only an axe (no nails allowed); the lightest and most durable paddle would gain points. The portage could be a combination of carrying the canoe up and down hills, shooting rapids to save time and, finally, across the finish line. How much water seeped into the canoe over the last leg of the trip would lead to deductions. Extra points could be made if fish were caught on the way.

Or, we could go the Mohawk route and have competitors run the gauntlet. Whoever survived the ordeal would be allowed to live to compete again.

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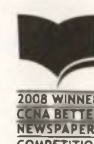
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Waswanipi tailings pond spill

By Amy German

After a dyke burst at the defunct Opemiska mine at the end of June, causing a mine tailings pond to spill into Slam Creek just down the waterways from Waswanipi, community members had concerns for the quality of their water supply. And this, despite reassurances from the Cree Regional Council and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

As Slam Creek flows into the Waswanipi River by way of the Obatigaumau River, some Waswanipi residents became suspicious of the immediate test results showing normal levels of copper, iron and zinc. Another source of worry concerned a covered dumpsite only 1,000 feet away from the tailings pond, which was used by Chapais hospital until sometime in the 1970s.

At a general assembly meeting in Waswanipi held just after the incident, the town decided to engage a private water-testing consultant to see if there was any actual contamination that went undetected by the MNR.

According to Waswanipi Environmental Director John Gull, "the MRN seem to be taking control of the situation. The Cree think that they are being blindfolded by the government because of that."

Though Gull also said that some locals did not feel confident with the MNR conducting the clean up from the spill because the government "is just covering up their mistakes," he did not agree with them.

Water samples to be tested by a private lab were collected July 16 at various points downstream from the spill and all the way to Old Waswanipi Post. The water was tested for various metals and arsenic that could have resulted from the spill. The results from the both the MNR's testing and Waswanipi's private consultant testing came up almost identical, Gull said, even though the testing was done in different areas.

Gull felt that some of the suspicion on the part of Waswanipi residents could have resulted from a water testing scandal that happened years ago when another mine tailings spill happened on the Chibougamau River. At the time the government announced that the water was clean, but US-based geologist and investigative scientist Christopher Covell proved otherwise by finding test results that showed high levels of arsenic.

Gull believes the incident might have contributed to doubt among Waswanipi residents. In an interview, Covell explained some of the reasons that residents may have a right to feel doubtful. "You can sample an area that has had a catastrophic failure of a mine tailing pond, but if you don't sample the right locations you are not going to get good data."

It was Covell's opinion that the specific contaminated zones in particular needed to be sampled. According to Gull they were not. As mine tailings are "chock-full" of contaminants, Covell is certain that there could be contamination still out there.

"If you sample 100 metres away from where the tailings pond failed and you sample that water, chances are it is going

"IF YOU GO DOWNSTREAM OR WHAT IS CALLED DOWN GRADIENT AND SAMPLE THE WATER AND OR THE SEDIMENT, IT IS GOING TO HAVE CONTAMINATION"



to be non-detect for any contaminants because you are sampling fresh water and it's already been flushed out as it's been a couple of days or weeks and it's all running clean on the top," said Covell. "But, if you go downstream or what is called down gradient and sample the water and or the sediment, it is going to have contamination."

Gull admitted that no sediment samples were taken during the testing. "There is no use for us to try and compete with those people (government bodies) by spending money and hiring consultants of our own if we are going to get the same results," he added. "That is what the Grand Council and the CRA are telling me. They said if you are going to start doing that you are going to be spending hundreds of thousands of dollars finding nothing of actual value. They said quit wasting your money there, as long as those people are willing to cooperate, you should cooperate with them too."

Gull said that he was advised by the Quebec environment ministry that there would be a fair amount of turbidity in the water as a result of the waste removal. As Waswanipi's water source is from the ground, Gull was told there would be "absolutely" no threat to drinking water.

As for the marine life, "it probably wouldn't affect the fish," said Gull. "According to [the ministry], there are a lot of diversions in that river. So these fish, when the turbidity gets too high there, they can go into another part of the river. They will stay in the diversions until the water is back to normal and the fish will keep travelling like that."

The clean up from the spill is expected to take up to one year.

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Ontario to protect boreal forest

By Amy German

news

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty made what he claimed is the single largest conservation commitment on the planet July 14 when he announced that 225,000 square kilometres of Ontario's northern boreal forest would receive permanent protection from "unbridled" resource development.

In doing so McGuinty said he is helping preserve the most carbon rich ecosystem left on the planet in an attempt to reduce global warming.



Under the new regulations, no new industrial projects would move forward without First Nations consent in a new approach that would also provide a standardized system for First Nations to receive resource sharing from industry profits. Until the legislation is actually written, a moratorium has been put into place for all new mining and logging contracts in the conservation area.

Though the forest industry is actually based in the southern portion of the Ontario boreal forest, the current Ontario Mining Act takes precedence over land use decisions in the province. Once the new regime is in place, however, it is expected to create new certainty for the mining industry by clearly defining rules and regulation, including consultation with Aboriginal groups.

"The boreal ecosystem is a very wet and carbon-rich environment and that is because of the soil type, the large peaty bogs," said Janet Sumner, executive director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. The Society, in conjunction with a number of other environmental groups, has been urging the Ontario government to commit to conservation effort for the past five years. According to Sumner, Ontario's 27 million hectares of peat bog produce 1,294 tons of carbon for every hectare.

At the same time, what McGuinty is announcing is a bare minimum, according to Sumner. "Most scientists admit now that the boreal forest ecosystem, to survive and thrive as an ecosystem, really needs at least 50 per cent protection."

Another defining point of McGuinty's announcement was that the legislation would be designed around certain key ingredients with one major being endangered species. The woodland caribou is among the endangered species that the new legislation is slated to protect. Watershed protection is another key ingredient.

"Wilderness is actually intact ecosystems that are functioning as they were designed and meant to function so that we have a healthy planet," Sumner added. "The more we lose, the less likely that we all can enjoy a healthy environment. The wilderness that we have provides ecosystem functions, it cleans the air we breathe, it filters the water that we all benefit from and it provides a carbon reserve that keeps from accelerating and exacerbating the problems from climate change."

The new Ontario legislation and consultation system is expected to take 10 to 15 years to be fully in place.

For as much as Ontario might be taking a step forward when it comes to the northern portion of the boreal forest, the situation is dire just south of it, and on the Quebec side it's even worse according to Greenpeace's Boreal Forest Campaign Coordinator, Mark Brooks.

Clear cutting at the hands of logging companies Abitibi-Bowater, Kruger and pulp and paper company Kimberly-Clark are common practice in both Quebec and Ontario's southern portion of the boreal forest. Only 9 per cent of Ontario's southern boreal forest is protected while in Quebec, it's less than 6 per cent.

Though it is the provincial government's responsibility in Quebec to police the forestry and mining industries, conservation practices are not at the heart of the mandate.

"I think we are in a situation right now where the forest industry basically polices itself to a large degree," said Brooks, who also contends that Quebec's mining policies "are about facilitating the expansion of mining and the development associated with mining."

In Quebec, logging and mining industries in the boreal forest do not meet sustainable goals in the industries employed on traditional lands. The Aboriginal communities that inhabit the area do not experience any economic benefits from these industries while the destruction threatens their food supply.

"We are seeing species like woodland caribou, which used to range across the province, retreating further and further north and dying off. Scientists are predicting that in the next 30 years we could see a total extinction or extirpation of the woodland caribou in provinces like Quebec," said Brooks.

The simple acts of mining and deforestation themselves are not only causes of ecosystem destruction, he added, noting that access roads also cause damage by fragmenting the forest.

"Species like woodland caribou again will not cross roads so you are having these smaller and smaller areas of forest that they can survive in and eventually they are too small to survive in and they start dying off," said Brooks.

Though both the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and Greenpeace were both pleased with Ontario's announcement as a positive first step, both groups expressed the desire to see similar regulations put into place in both the southern Ontario boreal forest and in Quebec.

What is HPV?

Human papilloma virus (HPV) is one of the most widespread viruses in the world. There are almost a hundred types of HPV that can infect different parts of the body. You can be infected with more than one type of HPV at a time, and more than once during your lifetime. HPV is the cause of almost 100% of cervical cancers and can also cause anal and genital warts.

How does HPV spread?

HPV spreads during sexual activity, with or without penetration, through skin-to-skin contact with the penis, scrotum, vagina, vulva or anus of an infected person. You still can be infected with HPV and pass it around, even if you do not have any symptoms or signs.

Who can get HPV?

Anyone who is sexually active can get HPV. About 70% to 80% of men and women will get HPV infection at least once during their lives. It is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI).

Why should I get vaccinated?

The vaccine is very effective at preventing cervical cancer and condylomas. Like most women, I risk being exposed to HPV during my lifetime. The virus is very often transmitted during sexual relations by a partner who does not know he or she is infected. Condoms protect against most STI, but not as much against HPV, which can be found on a part of the skin that is not covered by a condom.

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For more information about HPV:

Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux
www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/vaccination
www.hpvinfos.ca
www.sexualityandu.ca
Health Canada / Human papillomavirus
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca



Art and residential schools

Painter Glenna Matoush succeeded at bringing two very important subjects together – art and residential schools – during a two-day workshop in Nemaska July 30-31. Matoush used the opportunity to create two murals that represent the tragedy of the residential school system.

She asked anyone who wanted to participate to pick up a brush and paint. “Many of the young people attending really got into it, actually, I didn’t even really touch it,” Glenna told the *Nation*. “I only added a few touch-ups after it was finished.”

Her objective in having the work based on this subject was to make a powerful impact on people concerning the residential schools. “I would have liked people to write texts in the mural as well, thoughts they had on the residential school issue,” she said. “But many people were too shy.”

Both murals were left in Nemaska, where Matoush hopes they will stay.

Mistissini Police shoot local man

Mistissini Police shot and wounded Mistissini resident Willard William Trapper in the leg during a confrontation August 4.

According to police, Trapper was driving around the community with two other men and his girlfriend. He became very angry with one of the men, who apparently was being inappropriate towards his girlfriend.

“After dropping the two men off, he went home, picked up a gun and returned to the home where he had dropped them off,” Jean Tremblay of the *Sûreté du Québec* told the *Nation*.

The person who answered the door informed Trapper that the two men had left. In a fit of rage he began shooting at cars that were parked in the drive-way and at the house. “In total, he shot about 40 bullets,” said Tremblay.

When the police arrived on the scene and ordered Trapper to drop his weapon, he faced them with his gun still in hand. “The police took no chance,” commented Jean Tremblay. “They shot him in the leg to avoid being shot on themselves.”

Trapper was taken to the hospital in Roberval. He is healing and in stable condition.

O-J Golf Tournament

Ouje-Bougoumou held its 4th annual golf tournament July 11 at the Chibougamau golf course. The event, organized by the Ouje-Bougoumou Youth Council, promotes health, social, cultural, recreational and economic activities for the youth of all Cree Nations. All the proceeds raised went towards youth projects in Ouje-Bougoumou.

The first place winner Rene Cooncome won a trip for two to Whistler, BC. The second place winner Karen St-Cyr went home with a new computer.

In other competition categories, Shirley Bosum hit the longest drive among women entrants, while Karl Simard won in the male section of the longest drive. Jack Blacksmith won in chipping and the winner of the putting was John Kitchen. An auction for the Children’s Fund was also held in which Albert Diamond from Air Creebec gave a \$2,001 donation. The event ended with a speech from Ouje-Bougoumou Chief Louise Wapachee thanking everybody for their participation and donations.

Attawapiskat girl nominated for Peace Prize

Thirteen-year-old Shannen Koostachin has been nominated for the International Children’s Peace Prize. Koostachin has been fighting for a school to be built in her hometown of Attawapiskat.

She gained attention when she challenged Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl over his refusal to respect a federal commitment to build a school in Attawapiskat. “Minister Strahl told me he had other priorities than building a school,” Koostachin said.

Last month, Koostachin and three other young people from Attawapiskat served notice that they intend to confront the government during the upcoming review of the UN Rights of the Child Convention.

“I was always taught by my parents to stand up and speak for what I believe in,” said Koostachin. “We will keep moving forward, walking proud in our moccasins until we are given justice.”

Anishinabek to negotiate forestry rights

The Anishinabek Nation announced July 30 that negotiations on a new forestry deal are set to begin with the Ontario government.

The goal is to enable all 42 Anishinabek communities to gain better access to and stronger involvement in forestry development on their territories in Ontario. “Our goal is to be a more active participant in the resource-based economy by solidifying our involvement in the forest industry,” said Grand Chief Council John Beaucage.

The Anishinabek hope to be able to protect and implement their treaty rights to the forest resources, enabling them to have more control over their traditional lands.

It will also be an increased source of revenue. “These negotiations will look at new ways of doing business. The big-business monopolies of the past need to make way to enable small business and community-based opportunities,” said Beaucage.

Correction

In Amy German’s article, *Water Alert*, in the July 18, 2008 issue of the *Nation*, the water testing mentioned was actually done by the Ministère de Développement Durable et des Parcs. The article incorrectly stated that Environment Canada had conducted the testing.

OH WHAT A NIGHT!

NISKAMOON SENDS 15 HOPEFULS ON TO NEW CAREERS WITH HYDRO-QUEBEC

By Amy German



The Niskamoon Corporation honoured its newest graduating class July 15 with a golf tournament and a gala graduation ceremony for the 15 grads of two vocational programs, Automated Systems Electro-Mechanics, and Industrial Construction and Maintenance Mechanics.

With diplomas in hand, these grads are set to begin new careers as skilled workers at Hydro Quebec, a feat that just a few years ago seemed impossible, and for many, tantamount to a betrayal to Cree society.

On hand to celebrate their accomplishments were Matthew Mukash, who delivered the welcoming address; Gordon Blackned, Chairman of the Cree School Board; Violet Pachanos, Vice President of the Niskamoon Corporation; Kathy Shecapio, Niskamoon's Regional Coordinator of Training and Employment, and many others.

The graduates were commended for their efforts as completing these programs is no simple feat. Not only did the students have to relocate with their families for three years, the courses were also delivered in French. Many of the students had to attend upgrading courses for math and science before they could even embark on their Niskamoon journey. Several others had to attend French instruction courses throughout their summers before commencing the formal studies.



"I couldn't do that," Mukash told an audience filled with bashful students, their adoring families, Niskamoon members and the Hydro Quebec employees who will be welcoming the grads into their workforce.

Though Mukash acknowledged the Crees' difficult past with Hydro Quebec, he also spoke of moving forward in governance and coming to an understanding. A new chapter has begun with Hydro and Crees are now integrating into the corporation, he said. In his mind, the hatchet has been buried.

In an interview prior to the ceremonies, Mukash said, "When I left for school in pursuit of further studies in the south, my father told me to remember those virtues of survival. I think it is the same thing for the young people today, to have a good education. If you can not go back to the land, I always say, pursue your education and do the best that you can to succeed and this is really what we have seen today."

Gordon Blackned of the Cree School Board helped present diplomas. For Blackned, the graduating students are not only a success on their own behalf, but an achievement of the Cree people.

"I think that the Crees had to fight for that recognition to obtain jobs on the worksite and through this, the previous La Grande agreement didn't work out well," said Blackned. When the Paix des Braves agreement was ratified, however, it provided for the kind of funding needed for programs like Niskamoon.

According to Blackned, the school board also did their part by reprioritizing science and math courses to help those looking to pursue futures with Hydro Quebec as secondary 5 students are now writing exams at the provincial level with some success.

"We are getting somewhere and I believe that in the next two, three, maybe even four years, we will have students graduating with maybe even higher marks in those disciplines," said Blackned.

Niskamoon Vice President Violet Pachanos spoke on behalf of the corporation, saying this was only the beginning of their work. Expressing her congratulations to the grads in

"THOUGH MUKASH ACKNOWLEDGED THE CREES' DIFFICULT PAST WITH HYDRO QUEBEC, HE ALSO SPOKE OF MOVING FORWARD IN GOVERNANCE AND COMING TO AN UNDERSTANDING."





an interview with *the Nation* prior to her speech, she spoke of how the children of graduates will be enriched as a result of their parent's sacrifice as they will always have permanent employment.

In her address, Pachanos spoke of how important hydro-electricity is as a resource, considering that fully half of Quebec's electricity needs are supplied from Cree lands. Though Hydro currently employs fewer than 40 Cree employees at present (out of a total of 23,000), Pachanos was hopeful that the Hydro-Quebec would be able to fulfil the guaranteed number of employees—150—promised in the Cree Employment Agreement.

"It is possible for aboriginals to benefit from the huge hydro-electric resource produced on our lands and it is the wish that together with Hydro-Quebec and all of our partners we will attain the 150 permanent employment objectives by 2017," said Pachanos.

Niskamoon's Kathy Shecapio makes it a point to check in with those who have already graduated from the program to get feedback on their experience and to see how it could be improved. Though she said that they usually don't say much other than to express gratitude, what they do say is, "bring in more Crees!"

Though the courses are quite difficult, given the language and technical demands, Shecapio says more is involved.

"It takes a lot of courage to say that this is what you want to do, especially

when you take into consideration the love-hate relationship that we have with Hydro," said Shecapio.

Though the programs have gained momentum and the quality of the applications have improved since the first groups graduated through Niskamoon in 2006, Shecapio is not anticipating a waiting list to get into the programs in the next year. Since the 2008-2009 construction phase for Hydro began, it has lured away a great number of potential students looking for "fast cash."

Once the layoffs begin, she predicts, more applicants will turn toward Niskamoon, and this concerns her to a certain degree. "If you look at what is going on right now with the youth in the communities or even the adults, there is not a lot of value that is being attached to education in the Cree communities," said Shecapio.

Though he was unable to attend the event due to a recent stroke, Niskamoon President Billy Diamond made an address via closed circuit television. Despite having had surgery back in April and is now in the process of learning how to walk again, Diamond was never without his sense of humour. In reference to the bandages on his head and the peculiarity of the situation, Diamond made a joke of it, saying, "Luke, I am your father," much to the delight of a roaring audience.

In all seriousness, he went on to speak of how these first few batches of graduates are the "trailblazers," for their communities.

"IT IS POSSIBLE FOR ABORIGINALS TO BENEFIT FROM THE HUGE HYDRO-ELECTRIC RESOURCE PRODUCED ON OUR LANDS AND IT IS THE WISH THAT TOGETHER WITH HYDRO-QUEBEC AND ALL OF OUR PARTNERS WE WILL ATTAIN THE 150 PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT OBJECTIVES BY 2017,"

"If you look behind you, there is a whole new generation of young Crees who will follow you," he said.

Hydro Quebec representatives also had much to say. The chief administrator and public relations director for the La Grande region, Michel Lemay, spoke of how well the integration had been going as the Crees are flourishing on the job site.

"Every time there is a graduation, it is a success for Hydro and a success for the Crees alike," said Lemay.

In an address he made to the attendees on behalf of all of Hydro, Yves Lanoie said, "There is room for you at Hydro-Quebec and we will help you integrate into our family. We want you to become role models for the next employees as there are going to be many more to come."

When it came to what these 15 "trailblazers" underwent during their studies, many were surprised to learn of their strife and perseverance. As the majority of the students are also parents of young families, many acknowledged the difficulty of balancing their work and home lives. One woman in the course, who was already the mother of three children between the ages of eight and 18, gave birth while in her first year at school.

"The course was too easy," joked Paul Sealhunter as he played with his daughter Jessie-Lynn. Sealhunter graduated in Automated Systems and Electro-Mechanics from Centre Polymetier in Rouyn Noranda. As much as he was really grateful for the experience, he said he almost dropped out at one point.

Sealhunter had the misfortune of losing his grandmother during the first year of school, his grandfather during the second, and just this past February, he lost his brother.

"All three years were pretty hard but my wife stayed with me through thick and thin. My parents too forced me to stay in school, I thought about quitting but I am just glad that I didn't," he said.

Nancy Pelchat and her husband, Clarence House, made the training a family affair. Nancy took the course along with her father, aunt and cousin; she graduated from the program two years ago and became an electrician. Following in her footsteps, her husband Clarence also enrolled in the program and was one of this year's grads from the Automated Systems Electro-Mechanics course.

"I love it! It's a nice living. I moved to Chisasibi this year. I just waited for him to finish his course; we are both working for Hydro now," said Pelchat, who is presently on maternity leave.

Though she was anxious to start on the job, Pelchat insists that the actual transition into the work field was rather easy because she felt so well prepared and because she actually has a lot of fun with her Hydro comrades.

Pelchat was even surprised that her husband never once asked her for help with his homework even though she had studied the same subjects two years prior. House graduated with a special award for perfect attendance.

Despite the history between the Crees and Hydro, as time marches on some wrongs have been righted. Crees are finally integrating into the workforce and claiming some of the 150 promised jobs. With the mandate for training ending in 2017, Niskamoon still has plenty of room to graduate over 100 more students.

For more information go to: www.niskamoon.org



THE SPIRIT OF THE ISLAND

By Ernest Webb

Photos by Steven Caicedo and Ernest Webb

Far out man! Those words were spoken by Khajeesit, a contestant in the 1970s costume contest at Mamoweedow Minshtuksh on Fort George Island. Those two words could perfectly describe the whole gathering.

Mamoweedow Minshtuksh means "Let's get together on the island" in Cree. It took place July 23-28, and for the people of Chisasibi, Fort George remains a symbol of an era when times were simpler, when E9

lders and the young played checkers by the shore when the ladies trundled off to pick berries for their home-made jam and when the kids' only worry was whether their bait mixture made of flour, water and the secret ingredients that would attract the fish.

"FORT GEORGE REMAINS A SYMBOL OF AN ERA WHEN TIMES WERE SIMPLER"

The town was moved to the mainland in the late 1970s, when there were fears that the island would wash away in the increased flow from the newly constructed hydro dams upriver. Thirty years later the island remains; along with it the spirit of the community and the people who are drawn to the times when people spoke to each other and visited one another just to share a tea and a laugh.

Driving along in my late dad's old truck I noticed many of the places I hung out at as a kid were overgrown with willows and trees. I point out the landmarks and places where buildings had been to my friend Steven Caicedo, a New Yorker on his first trip to the north. I pointed out the yard of the priest where we would get kicked out of when we were caught enjoying the delicious strawberries. I pointed out the airstrip where everyone would gather when the plane came in, and the landing where people unloaded the year's supplies from the barge. I remembered a time when the hustle and bustle of today's Chisasibi was yet to be seen.





The look of utter joy on Richard Pepabano's face as he danced summed up the gathering for me. Social games such as various forms of musical chairs were played during the day with music, singing and dancing going into the wee hours of the morning. There were Elders also on hand to show the different aspects of Cree culture in one of the teepees set up for the occasion.

Many of the things we enjoyed were introduced from the outside, including the Scottish jigs and reels, along with the square dancing that comes with it. Another notable import and memory is Saskatchewan's Smilin' Johnny and his partner Eleanor Dahl who would tour the northern communities during the 60s and 70s, bringing their country music to northern communities that were usually accessible by air.

The fact that he came to entertain the people in those times was very much appreciated and people still remember; in fact, Smilin' Johnny made an appearance one year at Mamoweedow Minstuksh. This year Christopher Napash and his wife Lily along with Victor Herodier dressed up in the way Smilin' Johnny and his bandmates would have dressed back in the day. Christopher even had a replica upright bass as his prop.

My friend Steven and I met old friends and made new ones as we made our rounds on the island. One night, Steven, a DJ by trade, and I got on the air in the makeshift radio station with the brand of house music he is famous for spinning. One of my favourite moments came when Steven and I were asked to judge the 70s dress up contest. When the contestants were strutting their stuff as the music played one of the contestants yelled out the lights were "too bright for a teen dance." Then someone played with the lights turning them on and off then when all the lights were turned off everybody pulled out their flashlights and shone them up to the roof of the tent creating the perfect mood for the "teen dance."

As for the main attraction of fiddling and square dancing, we usually didn't make it to the end, hearing the music still going as the sun peeked over the horizon as we got to sleep.

At our camp I usually awoke to the sound of clanging pots and pans, signalling that it was time for breakfast. A post breakfast nap was usually in order. The Bearskin family area where we camped was very peaceful and evoked many memories of the town. The kids playing along the shore, the people sharing food, the laughter and the memories of the island made the visit a truly memorable one.

Many of those things we enjoy today we made our own. One thing we didn't have to bring in from the outside is the sense of community and the spirit one feels when surrounded by friends, family and the soft breeze coming off the river. Far out indeed.



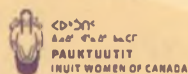
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We gratefully acknowledge permission to adapt design and concept of the *Lifesavers Project*® from Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada.

To all residential school survivors: may you and your families be strong.

I write because, like George, writing heals the wounds of the residential school experience
and the pain of being taken away from my family at a very young age.

This one is for all the Indian residential school survivors:

Crying,

*I hear children crying
At night is when the voices get strong*

*I hear children crying for their moms,
Dads, aunties, uncles, kuukum, juumshum
Like thunderous rain, they cry
At the full night sun like howling wolf, they cry*

*Like the little boy who wouldn't stop crying
When his grandfather, Addush left
What can we do to make you stop?
Said his Father.
If you bring Niibiin, I'll be happy again.*

*So Father went to look for Niibiin
He went where he heard the Elders tell Niibiin is
In the Land where the South Wind blows
Father went to search for it.
When he got near it
He saw Muskrat swim on the lake.
Muskrat, he said
Do you know where I can find Niibiin?
I'll offer you pi-mii
Good rich kakuush-e-pimii
The best you can find
Father knew that Muskrat loved grease
Especially Bear grease
So Muskrat revealed the secret of Niibiin.*

*That night Father went there
The teepee was well guarded by Trout and Walleye
Father ambushed them
Sewed up their mouth tightly
Before Trout and Walleye could shout
But I guess he didn't sewed up Trout's mouth too tightly,
Trout shouted with his tight little mouth,
Djiim-skim-kuunanuu dji-nii-biin-nim-nuu!
Djiim-skim-kuunanuu dji-nii-biin-nim-nuu!
They've stolen our Niibiin,
They've stolen our Niibiin*

But it was too late

*Father ran away with Niibiin
And Muskrat helped him swim across the lake.*

*Trout, Walleye and other animals chased after Father
But when Father's foot touched the ground
Snow melted
And flowers bloomed
And behind everything turned
White with snow*

*The Animals could not catch Father
So they went back to their village
They decided to hold a council
-Who told the Stranger where Niibiin was? they asked.
-It wasn't me, answered everyone, even Muskrat.
Trout and Walleye noticed Muskrat's fur paws were streaked
with Pi-mii*

*Earlier Muskrat dove under water
Past seaweed he swam
Hoping the Pi-mii would wash off
The deeper he swam
Harder the Pi-mii became*

*-Muskrat, where did you get Pi-mii?
-Oh, I found it along the shore as I was swimming on the lake.*

*Meanwhile Father arrived
Niibiin came
The little boy stopped crying
He played outside
He still missed his Grandfather, Addush
But Niibiin stayed with them*

*That's how seasons came to be
Niibiin is Summer*

*So for the Indian Residential School Survivors,
Like the little boy, Niibiin came
When Summer came
The crying stopped
They knew
Soon they're Coming Home.*

© Elma Moses, Montreal, July 11, 2008



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Chikâwîniu Aschî

The true costs of bottled water

By Manon Legault

Did you ever wonder what the fabrication of a water bottle does to our environment? How far did it have to be transported to get to you? What about the chemicals that leach from those bottles into the water? Many people prefer to purchase bottled water, believing that it is somehow safer, but that is not always the case.

The National Geographic website states that it takes almost 17 million barrels of oil to produce the 30 billion water bottles that U.S. citizens buy in a year. "Imagine a water bottle filled a quarter of the way up with oil. That's about how much oil was needed to produce the bottle," the site observes.

It also takes more water to produce a bottle than the volume of water that will end up inside it. According to the David Suzuki Foundation, "Canadians consume more than two billion litres of bottled water a year, and globally, we consume about 190 billion litres a year. Unfortunately, more than 85 per cent of those bottles get tossed into the trash rather than the recycling bin."

Pollution from plastics affects our water, land, and air. Many plastic bottles end up in landfills or get incinerated, and burning plastic releases toxic chemicals into the air. Plastic that stays on land or that is buried can take hundreds of years to break down, and even then, it doesn't completely biodegrade.

Plastic actually photodegrades. This means that the sun just keeps breaking it down into smaller and smaller pieces. The smallest pieces of plastic end up in the food chain where they are eaten by marine animals and birds, and too often, by us.

In order to help the environment, some people reuse water bottles. If you look at the bottom of a water bottle, there is a little triangle with the number 1 inside. That means that that bottle is only supposed to be used once. Chemicals, including Bisphenol A, leach into the water when the bottle is cleaned. Bisphenol A mimics estrogens (human female hormones) and has been linked to breast and ovarian cancers and childhood developmental problems. Other chemicals in plastics have also been shown to cause infertility and obesity.

To add insult to injury, many companies like Aquafina and Dasani get their water from municipal supplies. All they do is filter it.

Many municipalities up North have good tap water. If you can, why not drink it? If you're worried about chlorine, you can put water in a pitcher and let it stand overnight to allow the chlorine to evaporate. You can also use a carbon-activated filter for your tap, or a Brita pitcher. In many areas of Montreal we have lead in our water from old, rusty pipes. A Brita filter solves that problem by getting rid of lead along with other chemicals.

If you usually have trouble with the water in your community, you might need more than a filter in order to drink your



tap water safely. Some products, like chlorine tablets and special filters for travel and/or camping, can be used in the short term to get rid of giardia, bacteria, and viruses. Some filters come as part of a reusable water bottle. You can find them in travel stores and stores that carry camping equipment. You can also order them from websites like www.mec.ca.

If you're planning to use a reusable plastic water bottle though, please make sure that the number in the little triangle at the bottom is a number 5, as any other number will give you the same problems a regular water bottle would. Aluminum or glass bottles are safer that way.

A popular home water filtering system can be found at www.gtawater.com. Be forewarned, though, they are expensive. They filter everything from the water in your shower to the water from your tap.

CBC Marketplace also gives a few choices of water purification systems:

- www.seychelle.com sells a system for about \$40; works on any fresh water source; says it gets rid of Giardia, cryptosporidium and E. Coli
- www.rainfresh.ca sells a system for about \$200; packaging says it traps and kills bacteria and fecal coliforms, including E. Coli
- www.douton.ca sells for just over \$300; says it eliminates 99.99 per cent of E. coli in water

If you have no way of getting access to safe drinking water in your municipality though, by all means, drink bottled water. Maybe you can choose a brand that is made closer to you. Eska water is made in Quebec and comes from a renewable source. It also tastes good. If your local store does not sell it, ask them to look into ordering it. Water costs almost as much as gasoline. If you don't stop drinking bottled water for the environment, for your health, or for the future of our planet, you can do it to save money. Please think about it next time you consider buying bottled water.

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UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

Reconnecting with the land

by Xavier Kataquapit

I grew up surrounded by the wilderness on the James Bay coast. Our isolated community of Attawapiskat sits in the middle of a large area of mushkeg, swamp and tundra. We never had far to go if we wanted to see untouched forests or tundra. Our parents may have enjoyed the wonders of living in the wilderness all their lives, but in my generation, we were the first to experience a life that is caught between two worlds.

On one hand we had our heritage to live up to in visits to enjoy the land as our ancestors did. On the other hand we were thrust into a modern world with a million temptations that taught us to abandon any old world habits or ways of surviving off the land.

Even though we were surrounded by mushkeg, tundra, great rivers and a saltwater bay, a lot of the time I felt disconnected from that world. Our community had all the amenities of modern life, including a permanent home, electricity and a television set that plugged us into the entertainment world. We went to school where we were taught basically how to survive in this new world and even though we had easy access to the land our people inhabited for generations, many of us more or less lost our connection to it.

Life has changed a bit for me in the past few years. Probably the biggest change I underwent was coming to terms with alcoholism and addictions. This process brought about many unexpected changes that I continue to realize on a frequent basis. I lead a more quiet life now and I try to avoid too much chaos or confusion. One change that I am happy to experience is a rediscovered appreciation for the wilderness and the land.

At this point I am actually able to take long periods in my life to visit the land and spend some quiet time. It may sound totally boring to some people, but one of the greatest pleasures I have is to just sit in a comfortable spot away from biting insects and mosquitoes and just marvel at the forest. There is something magical about being surrounded by poplars, pines, cedars and birches as the wind blows through the leaves like nature's chimes.

I always had a need to find a quiet place in the midst of my earlier chaotic life. I would escape the every day hectic activity of never ending excitement, anxiety and frustration to try to find some quiet moment by a river, a lake nearby or by the rapids a short distance from town. I enjoyed stepping off the treadmill and taking a break alone in the wilderness. The peace I found in the forest put me at ease and gave me balance.

One afternoon, sitting on a dock by a lake, I watched a mother Shee-sheep or a duck and her brood of five fully grown chicks approach. They walked up to my chair and stared up at me in anticipation of some food. It occurred to me that others on the lake must regularly feed these birds because they had no fear of me whatsoever. If these ducks had known how I was raised and what attitudes I had to wildlife they would have never ventured near me. At any rate, I fetched some bread and tossed them bits and as they circled me. It dawned on me that I was really appreciating the beauty of these birds in their colours, their sounds and movements. I was raised to view ducks as food mainly and that makes sense given my heritage.

We were taught back home to respect animals whenever we came close to them but we rarely had a chance to get close to any sort of creature. In fact, whenever we ventured out on the land and came close to a live animal, we were either on the hunt or we were at risk of being killed or injured by a frightened creature. As a matter of fact the only time I ever got close to any bird or animal up north was when it was dead. So my visit with the duck family was something very precious and new for me.

My ancestors had a special relationship with the land and its creatures. I am sad to say that much of this has changed and I see that some of us have lost our respect for the animals and the land. We see them as food and prey and a part of a recreational practice. Elders tell us that it is up to us to take care of the land and to respect all of the life Mother Nature has to offer. So, Meegwetch to the duck family for helping me connect to Mother Nature on a perfect sunny day by the lake. I hope to see them again soon.

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BIRTHDAYS

On July 20th, God blessed us with a grandson named Jarome Tyson. Happy 2nd belated birthday grandson... You brought so much joy into our little family. You always say "Gookum" or "Seamon, do you love me?" Yes! We love you so much and many, many birthdays to come. I can see you really enjoyed your birthday at the beach this year. With love, Grandma Kathy, Grandpa Simon, Darien & Katherine.

Happy 5th birthday to Dano Silaluk Masty Angutigaluk, father Charlie, mother Enomey, on August 18th. She was saved from sure death at birth and became a strong, beautiful little girl. I hope that everyone remembers the turmoil, which was so hard, but because of great care, the results were strong and filled with joy. Love mom Enomey and Kokum Dan.

Happy 20th something to my mom from her mom Dano Silaluk and Danielle Masty. For your success and beating the odds getting a double sociology and

anthropology bachelor, congrats, and keep up with the good work, we need educated people in our nation.

CONGRATULATIONS

Thanks to everyone who attended and participated in my daughter's wonderful wedding. Congratulations, Minnie O'Conoor of Montreal, who married my new son in law Randy Tomutuk of Eastmain, James Bay. I was overwhelmed at the time and just went along with the events, so here is a belated speech for all who attended. I conceived Minnie by going to the emergency ward where I had my number 7 for an IUD, which allowed me not to have babies. But Minnie was determined to come into this world and ever since, I always knew she had a mind of her own and that she would be able to make her own path, just like all teenagers do. She wanted to explore drama and end up in Eastmain. I knew she could handle being on her own and I stayed in contact with her. That is where she met her

Pssst...

Have any information you'd like to share with *the Nation*? Feel like there's something the rest of the Cree Nation should know?

Well that's what *the Nation* is here for. Call us at 514-272-3077, and we'll look into your story. If you don't call us, your voice won't be heard!

CLASSIFIEDS

husband to be, Randy Tomatuk of Eastmain. I was in and out of depression and stress the year she got pregnant, which haunted me. I followed my mother's path. I worked on my emotions and feelings and almost did not go to the wedding, gracious grieves! I had forgotten traditional values, being stubborn, but pulled through the turmoil. I trusted my own instincts and attended the most beautiful wedding there ever was in Val d'Or. The bridesmaids came with their men, along with the flower girl and my 3 year old grandson, holding the rings on a little pillow, walking down the isle. Behind were my beautiful daughter and her father, walking down the aisle to her new husband. Great square dances, bride and groom dances and more. I learned a great deal, things that seemed uncertain turned into great events after all. I thank everyone who came and those who could not make it. My family tried to make it to the wedding but one of them gave birth to a baby girl in Montreal; one of them ended up escorting an elder to a Montreal hospital; one of them could not find a telephone number to reach us and my mother and sister turned back due to a doctor's appointment in Montreal. Lastly, my common law partner had to work. I hope my letter can make people understand. I also wanted to thank everyone for the great wedding gifts. Thank you all again from the bottom of my heart,

now that my daughter has great traditional families, I feel she is the happiest bride. Nagumimaghialuk!!! Lalli Betsy Annanack xoxoxox

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Where to get help: bilingual, anonymous, confidential and free phone services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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Parent helpline: 1-800-361-5085 (www.parenthelpline.ca)

Drugs: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.drogue-aiderreference.qc.ca)

Gambling: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence: 1-800-363-9010 (www.sosviolenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality resources center:

1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm)

(www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal:

1-866-403-4688.

(www.nwsm.info)



Residential School

Survivors:



A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: <http://www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources.html>.

2 Fun days!

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THE SAFARI PACKAGE INCLUDES:

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- 1 night lodging at the hotel or campground of your choice

Reserve the hotel or campground of your choice

		Couple	Family
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CAMPING BUREAU (Lacolle, LAKE and BEACH, 15 minutes from Parc Safari)	(450) 240-3305	\$90*(1)	\$120*(1)
CAMPING CANNE DE BOIS (Hemmingford, 5 minutes from Parc Safari, swimming pool and beach)	(450) 247-2031	\$100*	\$141*
CAMPING PREMIER *** (Hwy.15/Est 1, St-Bernard, 5 min. from Parc, with 2 services, outdoor pool)	1 877 240-4087	\$100*	\$141*
CAMPING COOLBREEZE (St-Bernard-de-Lacolle, 5 km from Parc Safari, with 2 services)	(450) 240-3785	\$101*	\$142*
MOTEL ERIC DESCHAMPS (St-Bernard-de-Lacolle, 500 feet from Parc Safari, outdoor pool)	(450) 247-2340	\$140*	\$201*
MOTEL RESTO-BAR LE DOUGLAS (Hapierville, 10 minutes from Parc Safari)	1 800 690-3363	\$140*	\$161*
AUBERGE VIELAS 4 SAISONS INN (Hwy. 15, 15 minutes from Parc Safari, break incl., outdoor pool)	1 877 294-2677	\$155*	\$200*
AUBERGE HOTEL PREMIER INN *** (Hwy.15/Est 1, St-Bernard, 5 min. from Parc Safari, outdoor pool)	(450) 827-2415	\$163*	\$200*
AUBERGE HOTEL PREMIER INN *** (Hwy.15/Est 1, St-Bernard, 5 min. from Parc Safari, outdoor pool)	1 877 240-4017	\$165*(1)	\$200*(1)
COMFORT INN BROSSARD (continental breakfast incl.)	1 877 266-3324	\$167*	\$200*
HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS SAINT-JEAN-SUR-RICHELIEU (break incl. / indoor pool & Spa)	1 800 825-4066	\$167*(1)	\$210*(1)
HOTEL LE DAUPHIN MONTREAL-LONGUEUIL (continental breakfast incl.)	1 800 640-0110	\$167*	\$200*
BEST WESTERN HOTEL NATIONAL BROSSARD (breakfast incl. / indoor pool)	1 800 485-0041	\$169*	\$210*
HOTEL GOUVERNEUR SAINT-JEAN-SUR-RICHELIEU (breakfast and dinner free for kids)	1 800 667-3815	\$178*	\$210*
HOLIDAY INN MONTREAL-LONGUEUIL ***** (indoor pool, spa, gym / children eat free)	1 800 263-0150	\$180*	\$220*

*Includes lodging for double or quadruple occupancy and admission for 2 people or 2 adults and 2 children (17 years and under) to Parc Safari for 2 consecutive days. Valid from June 21 to September 01, 2008, subject to availability. Off-season rates also available from May 16 to June 20, from August 25 to 29 and from September 02 to October 13, 2008. Taxes extra. 2-night packages also available. (1) Rates starting at.

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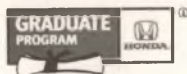
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